Bella Coola Indians - Chapter IX

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New page

Chapter IX (10 pt. rom. caps)

Relations with the Supernatural (10 pt. rom. caps)

The aspects of Bella Coola life thus far described have been principally of a nature capable of being experienced by any member of the community. On the other hand, contact with supernatural beings is a privilege granted to individuals without respect to rank; even arduous appeal cannot assure it. The few to whom signal favours are granted acquire a position of importance totally different from that of chiefs. The Bella Coola are firmly convinced that supernatural beings abound in the mountains and forests of British Columbia, and that every activity of human life is governed by them. Not only do these creatures include imaginary monsters, but birds, animals, and fish, even the activities of the human mind, are considered to be beyond the scope of normal life. Ancient stories describing the actions of strange creatures and of conversations between man and animals are accepted as truthful accounts, so that

~~obvious~~ to the Bella Coola ~~that~~ his ancestors were more powerful than he is today. Never considering the possibility of errors in his stories, he accepts the alternative hypothesis that mankind has sadly degenerated from the golden age. Nevertheless, he assumes that ~~supernatural~~ The beings have not altered, and ~~consequently~~ hopes to encounter ~~some of~~ them on every occasion. Moreover, this firm background of belief makes it easy for him to recognize supernatural influence in events which a white man would consider to be natural. It is impossible to over-emphasize this concept.

Dances portraying supernatural beings, ~~were~~ carried out with full vigour until a few years ago, ~~and~~ naturally fostered ~~in~~ belief in them among participants and uninitiated alike.

Supernatural Aid Granted To The Unfortunate

Experiences such as have just been cited are regarded as possible, and of not infrequent occurrence at the present time. On the other hand, supernatural aid granted to those in misfortune, though it is the theme of many stories, is not considered likely to happen now. The Bella Coola believe that narratives of such incidents are chronicles of actual events, and base their conceptions of many supernatural beings on their characteristics as therein described. There is no ceremonial significance attached to any of these stories; they may be, and are, told by anyone, frequently for entertainment. Unquestionably, there is a feeling that the moral brought out in such tales is of value in educating the young people, though this point is never emphasized.

Supernatural aid granted to an unfortunate person is termed lxlokwaladjut. The type of assistance, with the reasons for which it is given, is clearly indicated in the following tale. Power so obtained cannot be transmitted by the recipient, although memory of the experience is occasionally preserved as the theme of a susaok dance. The term is also somewhat loosely applied to any instance of help from non-human sources. The reason for the receipt of power is often attributed to the strong supernatural elements of the favoured one, or to his having made himself agreeable to powerful beings by the observance of ceremonial chastity or other propitiatory means. A few individuals assert that there is a tendency for supernatural aid to follow certain ancestral families, but such a belief is not universal.

The following story is typical of the kind of assistance granted, although, since the Bella Coola themselves do not generalize, no clear picture can be presented except through the native medium - a number of different tales, such as are given in the second part of the chapter.

Consequently, many of the young and middle-aged men claim to have seen visions similar to those of their elders. The incident described on page ^ of the stump which was thought to be a grizzly bear is a case in point. On ~~one~~ another occasion ~~the writer was talking to~~ a young man ~~who~~ mentioned casually that a few evenings before he had seen a headless man walking along the road near ~~the spot where we were standing at the time~~ a certain spot. Wishing to view the monstrosity more clearly, he ~~endeavoured~~ tried, unsuccessfully, to strike a match. ~~Nothing would convince the man~~ The reason was obvious to him: the power of the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ supernatural visitor prevented the match from lighting. The ~~writer is absolutely convinced that the~~ man was ~~not wilfully misleading him~~ undoubtedly convinced of his apparition. He must have seen something, perhaps a whorl of fog, somewhat resembling a human body; a white man would have considered such ~~an apparition~~ a sight impossible and absurd, whereas the ~~Indian~~ Bella Coola felt no difficulty in the appearance of such a creature and promptly accepted it for what it seemed to be.

Mental activities as well as ~~x~~ optical illusions are likewise ascribed to supernatural ~~intervention~~ agency. These include not only profound ~~xxxxx~~ agitations of the mind, but even what a white man would consider a passing thought. ~~The writer remembers~~ One ~~A~~ how morning when ~~he~~ ~~it was~~ about to start work, ~~with an~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~his~~ ~~an~~ a certain man ~~informant~~ stated that he would have good fortune during the day, that a dream had foretold it. At the time he was moving to a new house and needed help to shift a heavy stove. During the course of the day a number of white man happened to pass ~~the house~~ by and stopped to speak to him; the stove was mentioned, ~~and~~ they offered to ~~shift~~ move it for him, ~~which they~~ and did so easily and quickly.

"There you are, " said the man, "I told you I was going to have good fortune today."

On another occasion the same man claimed to have felt ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ that misfortune had happened to him, and soon learnt that one of his sons had been arrested on a charge of drunkenness and disorderly conduct. The man affirmed that he had this premonition before being aware of its cause, ~~but the writer~~ though this cannot be vouched for. ~~this.~~

The explanation of such manifestations of the supernatural, for so the Bella Coola consider them to be, lies in the conviction that every activity of the mind must have this cause, ~~xxxxxx~~ In consequence, ~~any~~ every thought is ascribed to a supernatural ~~activity~~ cause, ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ ~~as shown by~~ the functioning of the spirit. In the ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ round

of daily life there are always good and bad ~~x~~ incidents; the person who wakes expecting to meet one or other before nightfall recognises the fulfillment of his premonition in some small ~~incident,~~ occurrence, and narrates it to his fellows as proof of what he had told them in the morning. In case of some major event, such as death or disaster, ~~it seems rea-~~ ~~sonable to~~ the Bella Coola ~~that the supernatural, beings aware of what was impending,~~ assume that must have given some indication ~~of what was impending.~~ previous Looking back after the event, a man ~~he~~ easily persuades himself that he "felt" a ~~premonition~~ warning, and is more than ever convinced that his spirit, the cause of his thoughts, has supernatural ability.

Conviction in the near presence of the supernatural has had somewhat surprising results with regard to Christian Bella Coola. A man converted in middle life carries all the fervour and realism of the old religion with him to the new, and feels thoroughly familiar with the atmosphere of the Old Testament. Visi~~ons~~ tations, such as ~~are~~ there in described, are similar to those experienced by his fathers and himself and he scorns the white man who questions their literal accuracy. He continues to ~~xxxxxxxx~~ hear the voices of supernatural beings, and to ~~xxxxxxxx~~ interpret mental pictures as visions, but he ascribes them to the beings of the white man's religion. The following is a rather striking illustration of this point:

A number of years ago ~~one of the writer's informants,~~ a devout Christian whom it will be convenient to term X., was a patient in the hospital at Bella Bella. In the same ward there was a young Bella Bella lad whose sickness refused to yield to treatment. X. became interested in his neighbour and ~~he~~ began to ponder ~~on~~ about his condition. Presently he felt convinced that the lad would be better by seven o'clock the following morning, and told him so. A marked improvement was noticeable by the time predicted, ~~named,~~ but the white doctor foolishly gave his patient some more medicine and ~~x~~ he became worse. The same thing happened on the following day. The sick boy grew steadily worse until, nine days later, he felt that he was dying and asked X. to help him.

"No," replied X., "I am no doctor. But you will be all right. I see Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, Baptism and Belive-it (? Faith) by your bed. Repent and you will be saved."

X. added that the Bella Bella saw and repented before his death so that he has undoubtedly been saved.

X. is a personal friend of the writer's and a man with whom he worked for a number of months and whom he feels that he knows intimately. He is generally truthful, and any falsehoods he uses are so clumsy that they can be easily detected. In this case there is no doubt but that he believes he saw these four figures as four white human beings. He was in an emotional condition at the time, hoping and expecting to see something of the kind, and was not disappointed. In earlier days he would have seen supernatural beings of the Bella Coola pantheon with equal conviction. On quite another occasion, when he was preaching, the same man felt what seemed to be a heavy drop of water fall on his head. He was in the open at the time and, looking up, was surprised to find nothing from which it could have fallen. He realised that it must have been power which had come to him, and forthwith he began to preach as he had never preached before. Here also, the explanation lies in the expectation of supernatural assistance, and the belief that it had been granted to him undoubtedly strengthened his efforts.

It must not be imagined that all Bella Coola are equally liable to visions and mental visitations. Individuals differ enormously; some, such as X., are constantly ~~seeing visions~~ experiencing them, whereas others of more stolid disposition do not feel the presence of the supernatural to the same extent. None the less, beings of the other world are constantly around them and, before the introduction of Christianity, it is unlikely that any individual passed through life without coming in contact with some manifestation of the supernatural. Consequently, stories descriptive of this seem intelligible to the Bella Coola, bizarre though they may be to the white man. It is hoped that the preceding illustrations, drawn from recent times, will explain the mental attitude of the Bella Coola better than incidents from folk-lore.

Disregarding thoughts which, since they are caused by the ~~supernatural~~ spiritual elements of the human body, are ever-present, ~~at every instant,~~ relations with the supernatural may be divided into the following categories:—

I. Appearance of supernatural beings from which neither good nor bad results follow. Strictly speaking, every fleeting sight of a supernatural being belongs to this category, but it will be convenient to describe only experiences of a peculiar kind, such as the Bella Coola call x n a alawadjutlaix. Usually manifestations of the supernatural have certain effectsM consequently, there are few incidents of this kind recorded.

II. Supernatural aid vouchsafed to a man or a woman in distress. There are many tales illustrating this, which are told and retold to the children. In every case the assistance is given to one who has undeservedly, according to Bella Coola concepts, fallen into misfortune.

III. Supernatural good luck. This may be obtained by anyone, and consists of the acquisition of a supernatural object to attract, not only fish and animals, as if it were a potent bait, but money and goods as well.

IV. The acquisition of shamanistic power, with or without the ability to cure the sick. This may be received from one of two sources:

A. Tłitcapliłana or some other supernatural being.

B. Ghosts, which are likewise supernatural.

V. The obtaining of prophetic powers direct from the supreme god. There are few instances of this, and none that are ascribed to a remote period. It is possible that all examples of this kind can be attributed to indirect Christian influence.

VI. The obtaining of power from a supernatural being localized in a particular spot. This usually takes the form of succour when sick, and gives the person securing it ability to treat the same disease in others.

VII. Dreams. Those dreams in which supernatural apparitions visit the sleeper or in some way convey to himm advice or boons are considered in this section, too.

STERILE APPARATIONS - G&Gn a alawadjutlaix.

Of this type of inexplicable apparitions the most common are cases of a stone giving birth to a smaller stone, a tree falling almost to earth, then righting itself, or the sight of some enormous monster. Such an experience may come to anyone, and no one can tell what it may portend. The following examples will illustrate this kind of phenomenon.

About forty years ago a number of men were paddling home to Bella Coola one fine October day when, as they were passing beneath some precipitous rocks to the west of Kwatna inlet, they saw a giant as big as a medium sized tree, come leaping down into the sea. The canoers could not see his face, which was turned in the opposite direction, but as he sprang they noticed that his hands were shaking like a dancer's. He struck the water with a tremendous splash, hurling the spray a distance of a hundred yards. They knew that the being must be a snusx since it is well known that these creatures migrate to the mountain lakes for the summer and return to the ocean in the ~~xxxxx~~ autumn.

There is a tendency for supernatural apparitions to appear in close succession; so the paddlers were little surprised next day, as they passed near some flat rocks where seals were wnt to sun themselves, to see a number of these animals come hurtling down from among the trees on the slope of a near-by mountain. The last to appear was as big as a Grizzly Bear. Undoubtedly the creatures were supernatural beasts who had chosen to assume the form of seals. It had been a fine, clear day, but as soon they had taken to the water such a severe storm arose that the canoe was almost swamped.

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but as soon as the seals had taken to the water a storm arose, so severe that the canoe was almost swamped.

On the following day another adventure befell them as they were within sight of their destination. Passing the site of the present ~~ca~~ cannery, on the south side of North Bentinck Arm, about half a mile from its head, they went among some old stumps which at high tide resembled ~~-ed~~ basking seals. When in the midst of these stumps, they all seemed to come to life, crashing into the water in all directions, raising billows ~~Flows~~ which drenched the paddlers with foam and nearly wrecked the canoe. The travellers considered themselves fortunate in reaching Bella Coola alive.

~~2~~ 3. Apparations have appeared several times near Megatche Rose, the point between South Bentinck Arm and Labouchere Channel, a place noted ~~ill-famed~~ for storms. On one occasion the father of ~~an Indian~~ Bella Coola, who is now about sixty years of age, was near this point when he suddenly saw a light on the mountains on either side of the firod, at a distance of about six miles. The lights grew bigger and bigger, approached ~~each~~ each otner and receded, until finally they merged; it became light as day, ~~The night was extraordinarily light and the moon gradually withdrawn~~ although it was midnight at the time, and there was only a new moon. The lights separated after a little, till each gradually withdrew to its mountain and disappeared.

Near the same spot some travellers ~~people~~ once saw an enormous mountain goat walking on the surface of the water. There is always a certain amount of danger connected with the supernatural; ~~and~~ on this occasion a storm arose which swamped the canoe, and drowned all but ~~Only~~ one of its occupants. ~~was saved~~. As soon as the ~~canoe~~ craft was submerged, the storm subsided, ~~which~~ as is always the case after people have been drowned.

3. During 1924 a young Bella Coola was proceeding down South Bentinck Arm in his motor-boat. A storm arose and the waves poured into his craft until it almost foundered; in that event nothing could have saved him. In the midst of the gale he saw two pillars of water shoot up from the surface of the firoid to a great height. Finally they faded away ~~gradually~~

as if they had been smoke, and the storm ultimately subsided. No one could tell which supernatural being (had thus) manifested itself.

4. On one occasion a party of Bella Coola, ~~among whom was my informant,~~ (was) encamped on the shore of one of the bays of King Island opening from Labouchere Channel. As they lay dozing by the fire they became aware that a woman dressed in black was sitting near them, but closer to ~~the fire~~ (it) than ~~any~~ mortal could have ~~borne~~ (sat). She explained that she had been gathering mussels and was warming herself; then, rising, ~~she walked into~~ (walked) the sea and disappeared. She was one of the ~~people who live beneath the~~ (dwellers of) ocean ~~about~~ whom so little is known. ~~On~~ (Another time) ~~occasion~~ one of the same folk was plainly seen sitting on a rock, but as her observers blinked their eyes she vanished. Formerly these people were more often visible.

5. Dwellers in the underwater world are to be found beneath the lakes of the interior as well as under the ocean. Not many years ago when some men were carrying goat meat down from their hunting ground, they stopped beside the small lake which lies at the head of the creek Snuqä·x which enters the Bella Coola River about eight miles from the sea.

"I wonder what lives in that lake", one man said idly to a companion.

"Nothing", the other replied, but the first responded;

"You are wrong. Something evil lives there."

He had barely finished speaking when there rose from the lake a man with long hair, who stood, swaying back and forth, with the water around his thighs.

"There you are," said the first speaker to his doubting comrade, "I knew something lived yonder."

After a few minutes the man sank back under the water. Forthwith a strong wind began to blow, and snow not only fell from heaven but rose from the lake. The hunters, who were not clothed ~~for~~ ~~inclement~~ (for wintry) weather, had great difficulty in getting back to the valley.

6. Occasionally the ~~1078~~ works of ~~these~~ underwater people have been seen. ~~1078~~ 590 The father of an Indian about sixty years of age was paddling to Kwatna one night. He as well as the other occupants of the ~~ca~~ canoe heard a roaring noise and saw a fish-weir, similar to those used by the Bella Coola, stretching across Bruke Channel, which is about a mile and a half wide at this point. They went close to the beach and a brave man cut a passage through the dam. A similar trap was once seen stretching across South Bentinck Arm from Tallio P int.

7 .An unusual apparition may be regarded as an omen of death. Not many years ago a young half-breed saw a motor-boat moored to the bank of North Bentinck Arm with an eagle seated in the stern. He ran his own motor-boat towards it, but as he drew near the eagle became a man. Then as he drew still nearer, never taking his eyes off the other boat, it, with its occupant, sank beneath the water, without leaving so much as a ripple. On ~~telling~~ relating the incident to his father, ~~about it,~~ the latter ~~realized~~ recognized it was an omen of death. Six months later the half-breed's sister died, thus confirming her father's ~~diagnosis.~~ prognostication.

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The Good Fortune of 'Yeäxdji

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Not long after the earth was first populated there were living at Q'wiyaii, near Namu, two Bella Bella men, Qomo'sala and Kälk!m, with their wives, relatives and slaves. ~~But~~ Qomo'sala's son, 'Yeäxdji, fell a victim to the virulent disease, t'lokälx, which causes the face of the sufferer to ~~become swollen~~ swell and his flesh to become rotten. When the case appeared hopeless his father called his ~~slave~~ herald to tell the people to abandon Q'wiyaii, ~~that they were going~~ and to leave the dying youth alone. Accordingly they removed the planks from the houses, packed them on canoes with all the food and clothing from the village and went away leaving the unfortunate Yeaxdji alone in his misery. Only an old slave woman took pity on him: before she left she hid some glowing embers with frayed cedar bark in a large clam shell and told him where ~~he would be able~~ to find them.

'Yeäxdji wept bitterly when his relatives departed, but presently he dried his tears and set about making the best of his position. First he unearthed the clam-shell and blew the embers into a fire, Next he made a hammer with ~~the aid~~ of which he built a rude shelter. A diet of clams at first satisfied him, but before long he made a hook in hopes of catching some trout. He went up the river to a suitable spot, dropped in his baited hook and almost immediately felt a bite. ~~Eagerly~~ He hauled up his line eagerly, but alas it was only a worthless bull-head. Angrily he pulled out the hook and threw the fish back into the water with a curse. Again there was a bite, and again he drew up his line only to find that it was a bull-head, which he hurled back into the river. This happened twice more, until, discouraged at landing only four useless fish, he wrapped his head in his cape and cried himself to sleep. The next day Yeaxdji again tried his luck fishing, but again only landed four bull-heads, and again cried himself to sleep. It was the same on the third day and the fourth, and in the evening the hungry and disconsolate youth cried for a ~~very~~ long time, ~~before he could get to sleep~~. his head wrapped in his cape.

Presently he felt someone kick his foot and heard a voice saying, "Stop crying and Get up!"

But when the startled 'Yeäxdji opened his eyes there was no one in sight. Knowing that he must have been mistaken he again covered his eyes and went to sleep. But he was aroused in the same way, once more without being able to see his visitor. This time before he lay down he made a tiny slit in his cape so that while he pretended to be asleep he was really watching through the eye-hole. Soon he saw a beautiful woman approaching. Her hair was worn in long braids as was the fashion of Fort Rupert women. Eagerly Yeaxdji threw back his cape but at his first movement she vanished. There was nothing to do but hope that she would return so he again lay down with the opening opposite his eye. Again the woman drew near but this time the youth did not move, even when she kicked him and repeated her command not to cry.

"I see you", he answered, "don't run away".

The strange woman sat down without demur.

"Why did you throw away my children?" she asked. "They showed kindly feeling towards you in allowing themselves to be caught, and yet you rejected their overtures with curses. None the less I have seen your misery and have come to help you. First I shall cure you."

When she had done this the woman cont nued, "I am going to give you supernatural power: ~~make you an alukwalat~~ when you want anything, just think of me and it will appear. I give you the chief's ~~stalt mx~~ name Kaiusdiäs, when you give a potlatch ~~l m~~ you must carve me on the posts of your houses. My name is ~~Qolen~~, Beaver."

Then the woman vanished. She was a beaver in human form, which all animals are able to assume at will, but few mortals have the ability to see them otherwise than as animals.

'Yeäxdji decided to test his newly received power by wishing for a house. He thought of Beaver ~~Qolen~~, and forthwith there stood a fine house before him. By merely thinking of his benefactress he was soon able to fill his house with ~~all kinds of~~ goods,

III. SUPERNATURAL GOOD LUCK.

A third manner in which a Bella Coola can come into contact with the supernatural is through supernatural good luck. This consists in obtaining something from a supernatural being, usually a portion of its slain body, and this object acts as bait to salmon, animals, and even to such inanimate articles as blankets or skins. Since this good fortune is wrapped up in a specific object it follows that the good fortune is transmissable. In fact one of the chief advantages to the man who owns some valuable object is the wealth which he derives from selling a small portion of it.

The Bella Coola term for supernatural good luck is siyɛ, meaning, "what is good." It is most frequently obtained either from a ~~from one of the three supernatural creatures~~, mätsqus, s·siutɬ. ~~or kɛken·i.~~ The mätsqus resembles a toad of enormous size, with a blazing fire-like glow in its throat, the s·siutɬ is a double-headed salmon which can travel on land, ~~and the kɛken·i is a kkkk bird rather smaller than a crow with black, irridescent plumage~~. The person who succeeds in killing one of these creatures can use the carcass as a lure to wealth, if he knows the proper means. The portion must be wrapped in some article which has been in close contact with the ~~finder~~ larger. A soiled article of clothing is most commonly used, and kept carefully hidden for one year. That is in a cranny to which no rain can penetrate. After that it can be used as bait. There is equal potency in a stick or other object which has come in contact with the beast. ~~There is~~ Great danger attached to the sight of a mätsqus or s·siutɬ since death usually follows any incorrect attempt to gain wealth from either. ~~one of these creatures~~. The person who sees one of these creatures feel no ill effects until he draws near a fire, when his stomach bursts. All the Bella Coola agree that if a person has been in contact with one of these creatures he can be saved by the use of certain medicines, but the following stories show that there is no clear-cut opinion as to which is the best cure. In fact, most families have the knowledge of a cure which they consider to be the best.

The opportunity to obtain supernatural good luck does not come solely to unfortunate individuals, in fact the Bella Coola state that it is fortuitous. It appears, however, that frequently that person who is thus favoured is one who has

Even a tiny morsel placed on a fish-weir will attract numerous salmon, and if set on a trap will act as an infallible lure to animals. When placed in the owner's box, valuables will be attracted to it as to a magnet. Thus the fortunate possessor will be able to give many potlatches and to reach a high position in the community.

blankets, mats, boxes, benches, cooking utensils and food of all kinds, while on the beach he soon had a flotilla of canoes. The whole establishment ~~showed that~~ bespoke the prosperity of its owner. ~~was prosperous~~.

Meanwhile Qomo'sala and those with him were in dire straits for food. One day the old slave woman who had befriended 'Yeäxdji happened to be foraging not far from Qwiyaii when she saw smoke rising from the place. She assumed it to be a forest fire, but when she idly went near to investigate, her amazement was past all bounds at seeing a fine house filled with luxuries. Nor was her ~~amazement~~ surprise lessened when she discovered that Yeaxdji was lord of it all. He welcomed her gladly and not only gave her a hearty meal but sent back with her some ~~food~~ seal meat for her child, only adding that it was to be eaten secretly as he did not wish his father to know of his prosperity.

"But", he added, "I don't mind if you send me any of the people except my father, ~~and~~ especially any who were good to me long ago."

The slave woman thankfully carried the meat home to her child. But he, long deprived of proper food, ate so ravenously that night that a lump of meat stuck in his throat ~~so that~~ and his coughing awoke Qomo'sala. The ~~stalk mx~~ chief pounded the youngster's back until he ~~was able to~~ vomited ~~the choking meat which he then saw was~~ what was obviously a piece of seal. The slave woman, remembering Yeaxdji's order, tried to evade his questions as to where her son had obtained it, but at last she blurted out the truth, how the abandoned youth had become propperous.

The slave women and her friends moved to Qwiyaii where 'Yeäxdji used his power of thought to obtain for them ~~x~~ houses filled with everything they could desire. But Qomo sala and those left with him were starving, so that they too were driven to seek his aid, gladly marrying their daughters to him in return for his protection. He rapidly rose to a position of importance, being the husband of both real and fictitious wives, and was even able to ~~supply~~ provide his elder brothers with ~~wives~~ mates. Some of the women "married" to him became his slaves, ~~in that~~ as their families were unable to rebuy them.

certain medicines, but the following stories show that there is no clear-cut opinion as to which are the best specific. In fact, most families have knowledge of a cure which they regard as the most efficacious.

The opportunity to obtain supernatural good luck does not come solely to unfortunate individuals; indeed the Bella Coola state that it is fortuitous. It appears, however, that usually the person who is thus favoured is one who has practised ceremonial chastity, or is, through some other means, in a state of cleanliness, such as is pleasing to the supernatural ones. At any rate the danger of seeing such a creature is less to a person who is in a pure condition than to any other. Further, in most cases the appearance of one of these creatures happens to a person whose ancestors have seen one of them. They are not regarded as an inheritable right, but as a tendency. For generations no member of a family may see such a creature, but the tradition is preserved, and when one is seen it is recalled that such have been seen by ancestors of the fortunate one. Instances have occurred in which a person has obtained good luck without the tradition of this being in his family, but they are rare. On the other hand a man may lose the advantage of his possession, even if he own a portion of a mitsqua or sisiutl, through failure to observe ceremonial chastity.

Some of the Bella Coola believe that the mitsqua and the sisiutl are the same animal, which can assume these two forms. Others are emphatic in their belief that the two are distinct supernatural creatures. In any case the powers and characteristics ascribed to them are the same. Most Bella Coola families have a tradition regarding the appearance of the one or the other to their ancestors, and the information to be derived from them is always about that particular creature. Hence the details here described are probably not known to any individual Bella Coola.

The different types of appearance, and the different types of taboos called forth should be noted. These are due to the failure on the part of the Bella Coola to rationalize the sum total of their beliefs. Each

man recounts what he believes to have happened to one of his ancestors or friends, irrespective of whether or not the methods used may be in direct contradiction to those used by some one else on another occasion A man who has heard of the mätsqua, for example, from his father and mother, may describe contradictory methods of dealing with the creature and in each case may affirm that disaster would have followed if the methods described had not been carried out. Such lack of co-ordination in belief is typical of the Bella Coola.

No space

According to an elderly Kimsquit man, the matsqus was brought down in the beginning if time by one of his own ancestors, Omqomkil ka.(1) It is to this fact that he attributes his own near approach to one on two occasions. As it is not until frequently after the fourth appearance that a person obtains supernatural good luck, he is still hoping for two more, the second of which he expects to be friutful.

One day as he was poling up the Kimsquit river he heard a sound resembling thunder proceeding from a log-jam. From descriptions given him by his father, he knew that this must be the voice of a matsqus but, not having observed ceremonial chastity, he was afraid to investigate, although the sound seemed to follow his canoe for a considerable distance; it only stopped when another canoe approached. From the fact that he alone heard the ~~xxxxx~~ voice, he knew that it was for him that the creature had come and only the arrival of other people had deterred it from appearing.

On another occasion the same man was close to the nest of a matsqus. He and another hunter were together in the forest above the Dean river and both saw the stone nest behind the waterfall, but for some time each refrained from pointing it out to the other. Towards dusk the first man's attention was called to it by his companion, and they debated on a course of action. Each was desirous of obtaining the benefits to be dreived from a successful use of the nest, but each was afraid of the evil consequences of the oportunity should he fail. The friend had observed continence for some time so it was decided that in the morning he should be the one to make the approach; the ~~xxxxx~~ man, versed in these matters, instructed him very carefully what to do.That night both men were too excited to sleep.

(1). See p.